

unadvisable.”⁶⁹ In Wilmington, Benjamin Keith tried unsuccessfully to revive the Populist Party for the 1900 elections through attempts to unite men who were opposed to the activities of Red Shirts. Populists saw much danger in the Red Shirt campaign and feared that further encouragement of Red Shirts by Democrats would lead to voter intimidation statewide, as well as “riot, slander, abuse, physical violence and general anarchy.” They attempted to diffuse the crux of the Democratic Party’s campaign—white supremacy and fear of “negro domination”—by removing it from the stage. Fusionist Jeter Pritchard acknowledged that “candidacy of colored people at this time for local offices would do more to assist the Democrats in their unjust and unwarranted assertions, than all other causes combined.”⁷⁰

Governor Daniel Russell and the Republicans also strove to counter Democratic assertions of negro rule. In early 1900, Russell said that if Southerners had accepted more readily the early terms of Reconstruction, Congress would not have been forced to press black suffrage on southerners in the Fifteenth Amendment. He argued that the suffrage amendment proposed in North Carolina sought to negate the federal amendment and challenged northern Republicans to become more involved in assuring the rights of blacks as they had done after the Civil War. Russell’s arguments were misinterpreted by many whites in North Carolina, who chose to believe that he was, at heart, in support of the suffrage amendment. The resulting squabble in newspapers separated Russell

further from the Republican Party. Because of such misunderstandings, the disjointed party could not mount an offensive against the emboldened and more powerful Democratic campaign leader Furnifold Simmons.⁷¹

Simmons and his Democratic Party workers followed the same plan as 1898, adding the suffrage amendment into the mix. Red Shirts, White Government Unions, rallies, and print campaigns followed much of the same pattern. However, the tone was stronger and focused on maintaining the upper hand gained by victories in 1898. In a July 1900 rally, speakers proposed to remove the black vote from politics through “peaceful methods” but reserved the option of force “if a conflict comes.”⁷²

Throughout the 1900 campaign, Wilmington was quiet because Republican, Populist, and black opposition had already been crushed. Non-Democratic whites still were intimidated and blacks continuously were told not to let troublemakers into their community. The Democratic tickets in the county were unopposed, and only a few eligible black voters who remained in the city registered to vote. New Hanover had the fewest votes of any other county in the state against the suffrage amendment with only two votes cast against it and 2,967 cast for it.⁷³ Democrats also manipulated the gubernatorial election: New Hanover had returned a Republican majority in every governor’s race from 1868 until 1896 with only one exception but in the 1900 election,

⁶⁹ Joseph M. King to Marion Butler, October 25, 1898, Marion Butler Papers, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

⁷⁰ Hal Ayer to Marion Butler, December 30, 1899, Marion Butler Papers, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill; Jeter Pritchard to Charles N. Hunter, January 26, 1900, Charles N. Hunter Papers, Duke University Library, Durham.

⁷¹ Crow, *Maverick Republican*, 145-148.

⁷² *Washington Post*, July 27, 1900.

⁷³ The overall state totals in November, 1900, for approval of the amendment was 182,217 votes for the amendment and 128,285 against the amendment. The counties where the amendment was defeated were western counties with black minorities such as Wilkes, Rutherford, Anson, and Henderson. *Wilmington Messenger*, August 5, 1900; R. D. W. Connor, ed., *A Manual of North Carolina*, (Raleigh: Ussell & Co., 1913), 1016-1018.